



Army Operations World War II

The crucial information needed for a search

The National Archives holds records which might contain the information you require and we can:

- Either search for it on payment of a fee and supply you with the information (if found)
- or
- Enable you to search for the information in other ways.

Please send as much information as you can. The following details are particularly important:

- The name of the unit or force*
- The name of the operation or battle
- The date or dates*
- The name of particular places or people

If you have all of the information marked with an asterisk*, the standard charges for our searches will apply and these are shown on this leaflet. If you do not have this information, the standard charges will not apply, as the search time will increase by a large amount, and therefore the search will require a very high fee to be paid. Please contact us if you still want to proceed: enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk

1. and 2. Unit War Diaries

Standard charge: for the first month - £60, for each additional month for the same unit as before - £30

Catalogue references: WO 165-WO 179 inclusive, DEFE 2

War Diaries contain monthly accounts of unit operations.

These records can be useful for tracing details at the lower level of military activity.

Information that this source should reveal:

These records may include names of people (normally officers only) and places, maps, orders, intelligence summaries, etc.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The records are arranged by the campaign or force that the unit was part of, then by year and then by title of unit. They are mostly complete, but there are some gaps. It is not essential to know which campaign or force the unit was in for a search to be carried out. It is essential to know the name of the unit, e.g. 73 Division or 43 Field Regiment.

3. Military headquarters papers

Standard charge: £90

Catalogue references: WO 197-WO 205 inclusive, WO 219, DEFE 2

These are the records created by the overall headquarters in each theatre of operations, e.g. Middle East, North-West Europe. There is one series of papers for each campaign or force. They are more useful for tracing the overall history of an operation.

Information that this source should reveal:

They relate to planning of operations, organisation of forces, intelligence, and include some summaries of operations at the higher level of command. They also include some maps. They do not include names of soldiers, except senior officers.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The records are arranged by campaign or force, and then by date. They are mostly complete, but there are some gaps.

4. War Office directorates

Standard charge: £90

Catalogue references: WO 106, WO 107, WO 193

They relate to more specialised functions in the army but often include summaries of operations.

Information that this source should reveal:

The content is sometimes similar to the headquarters papers; e.g. reports, maps, etc. They do not include names of soldiers, except senior officers.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The records are arranged by date. The records do not cover every operation that took place during the war.

Sources Outside The National Archives

The Imperial War Museum also holds information that may be of interest. They are particularly useful for documents, printed books, photographs, oral history and the National Inventory of War Memorials.

They can be contacted at: Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, London SE1 6HZ, +44 (0)20 7416 5221. Website: www.iwm.org.uk/

Publications

There may be published books that contain the information you require, such as the *Official History of the Second World War* series. Such titles should be available via your local library. Some relevant titles can be found in the library at The National Archives.